

Private Joseph Patrick Pender (Number 225893) of the 1st Battalion, Canadian Engineers, of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated in the stone of the Canadian National Memorial which stands on *Vimy Ridge*.

(Right: *The image of the vintage Great War Canadian Engineers' insignia is from the eMedals web-site.*)

(continued)



His occupation prior to military service recorded as having been that of a *labourer*, Joseph Patrick Pender appears to have left no history behind him of his early years spent in the capital city of the Dominion of Newfoundland with his parents and five siblings, nor of his travels to the Canadian province of Ontario. All that may be said with any certainty is that he was present in the city of Toronto in the month of August of 1816, for that was where and when he enlisted.

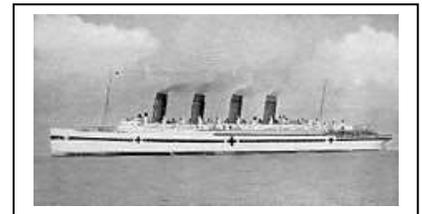
His first pay records show that it was on August 14 that Private Pender was first remunerated for his services by the Canadian Mounted Rifles Depot and that it was by this unit that he was *taken on strength* on that same day. It was on that date as well that he underwent a medical examination, a procedure which was to pronounce him to be...*fit for the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force*,...and attestation, his oath being witnessed by a local Justice of the Peace.

It was then on only the following day again that the formalities of Private Pender's enlistment were brought to a conclusion when the Commanding Officer of the unit, Lieutenant Colonel W.C. Brooks, declared – on paper – that...Patrick Joseph Pender...having been finally approved and inspected by me this day...*I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation.*

The CMR Depot had been established in September of 1915 in Hamilton and was likely based at the Armouries there on James Street – although this needs confirmation. Thus this may well have been to where Private Pender was then ordered for a few weeks of very basic training before his despatch to *overseas service*.

On or about October 20 of that 1916, the 6th CMR Draft, of which Private Pender was a soldier, boarded a train which was to transport the unit to the east-coast port of Halifax. There, on October 26, it boarded His Majesty's Transport *Mauretania*, the ship then having sailed soon afterwards.

Private Pender's 6th CMR Draft was not the only military formation on board: also taking passage for the trans-Atlantic voyage on the requisitioned *Cunard Steamships* liner were three Overseas Battalions of Canadian Infantry: the 154th, the 170th and the 172nd.



(Right above: *At the time of her launching in 1906, Mauretania was not just one of the largest vessels of her day, but also one of the fastest. During the Great War not only did she serve as a troop-ship, but as a hospital ship and, very briefly, at the outset of the conflict, as an Armed Merchant Cruiser. The image of her in hospital ship garb is from the Wikipedia web-site.*)

Mauretania made the crossing in five days and docked in the English west-coast port of Liverpool on October 31. From there the 6th CMR Draft was taken by train in a south-easterly direction across the country to the large Canadian complex of *Shorncliffe*, on the coast of Kent and in close proximity to the town and harbour of Folkestone.



(Preceding page: *Little remains of Shorncliffe Military Camp today apart from a barracks occupied by Gurkha troops. The Military Cemetery almost alone serves as a reminder of the events of a century ago. – photograph from 2016*)

Once at *Shorncliffe* the unit was almost immediately posted, on November 1 – perhaps for bureaucratic reasons – to the Royal Canadian Dragoons Reserve Regiment under whose command Private Pender and his comrades-in-arms were to remain for less than forty-eight hours. On November 3 they were transferred to the 11th (*Canadian*) Reserve Battalion.

Then Private Pender became ill. The following is an excerpt from his Medical Case History documented by the Ontario Military Hospital, Orpington, just south-eastwards of London, the paper dated Sept 2: *...enlisted July 22/16 in Hamilton Ontario...to England Oct 19...reported sick in London Nov.8...to St. George's (in fact it was King George's) Hospital...left pneumonia to Orpington Dec 2...**

However, according to his personal papers, Private Pender was admitted into the King George Hospital, London, on November 14, there to be deemed *seriously ill* from influenza. This would later develop into a case of pneumonia for which he was then to be forwarded to Orpington (see above) for further treatment. On December 14 he was discharged.

**As seen, there are several discrepancies in what has been recorded, however, in both cases the soldier referred to appears to be our Private Pender (225893). It has not been possible to ascertain which version is the correct one.*

During the period following hospitalization and having been *struck off strength* by the 11th Reserve Battalion, on December 15 Private Pender was to become the responsibility of the CCAC at Hastings, on England's south coast; the *Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre* at the time was the bureau which organized the sick and wounded admitted into hospital and then released, in the United Kingdom. The *Assembly Centre* worked so well – having apparently misplaced some twenty-thousand files - that it was to be dis-banded in the summer of 1917.

However, at this time it would appear that there was a rehabilitation centre of sorts at Hastings – at St. Leonard's-on-Sea? – and it would also appear that this is where Private Pender was to remain until January 27 of the New Year, 1917, when he was returned to *Shorncliffe...fit for full duty...and there was taken on strength* once more by the 11th Reserve Battalion.

Only six days after having returned to the 11th Reserve Battalion at *Shorncliffe*, he was again *struck off strength* by this unit and to be ordered to report to the 107th Battalion stationed at the Canadian military *Camp Witley*, this establishment in the vicinity of the community of the same name, Witley, in the southern reaches of the county of Surrey.

The 107th Battalion (*Winnipeg*) at its outset had been a Canadian Infantry Battalion but by the time of Private Pender's attachment to it, it had been transformed into the 107th Canadian *Pioneer* Battalion, an element of the 1st Canadian Division. It was to be employed mostly for engineering work although the *Pioneer* Battalions were to undergo infantry training and at times would engage the enemy as such.

Two weeks after his arrival at *Witley Camp*, Private Pender was to make himself known to the Battalion authorities. The offence on this occasion is not clear – although it was usually for having been *Absent Without Leave* (see further below) – but it was to earn him three days of *Field Punishment Number 2*; this penalty entailed hard labour, confinement, and also the loss, in the case of a private soldier, of his dollar-a-day pay and his daily ten-cent field allowance.

The 107th Battalion was soon to leave *Witley* and England for *active service* on the Continent. It did so on February 25, leaving the camp early that morning to travel via Folkestone and the French port of Boulogne on the coast opposite. Having spent the night in close proximity to Boulogne, it would then board a train on the morrow to its destination, the area of the community of Barlin, some ten kilometres almost directly south of the historic town of Béthune.



(Right above: *A view of the coastal town of Folkestone almost a century later as seen from the top of the white cliffs of nearby Dover – photograph from 2009*)

(Right: *The French port and fishing town of Boulogne at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)



When the 107th Canadian Pioneer Battalion had left England behind, it had also left behind Private Pender. He was now to remain at *Witley Camp* until the end of that March labouring with the *Base Details* – work to be done that had little to do with soldiering. However, on March 29, having arrived that night from England and having travelled southwards by train, he now reported to the Canadian Base Depot of *Rouelles Camp*, le Havre, where he was re-attached – on paper - to his 107th Battalion. He had been one of two-hundred eleven arrivals from England on that day.

(Right below: *The French port-city of Le Havre at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card*)

Once on the Continent it was not to be long before Private Pender found himself in trouble again: 2/4/17 – *Sentenced to 14 days F.P. No 2 Conduct to the prejudice of good order & Military Discipline i.e. neglecting to obey an order given by an NCO...*



Having served his two weeks he was then classified as...*Class 'A', fit for duty*. Now all he had to do was to wait for a further ten days.

On April 26, 1917, Private Pender was despatched from *Rouelles Camp*, le Havre, to report to the 107th Canadian Pioneer Battalion. He was not, however, to be recorded as having joined his unit until May 5: where he had been during this nine-day period is not clear - perhaps with an entrenching battalion, labour units which were oft-times used for the

purpose of holding re-enforcements until an appropriate moment while at the same time availing of the temporary man-power.

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In the meantime, while he was still in England, Private Pender's Battalion had been working hard. On the day after its arrival at Barlin followed by a night spent in billets at neighbouring Masnil-les-Ruitz, it had marched southwards to the area of Écoivres where it was to remain hard at work for the next seven weeks.

During that month of March, 1917 – and the February just before - the majority of Canadian Infantry battalions were to be undergoing training, some of it the everyday burden of the infantryman, but some of it also of a novel nature: learning the topography of the ground to be attacked; the use of the enemy's weapons which, when captured, were to be turned against him; the by-passing and thus isolation of strong-points instead of the costly assault; the coaching of each and every soldier as to his role on the day; the increased employment of aircraft in directing the advance; the concept of a machine-gun barrage; and the exchange of information between the infantry and artillery so as to co-ordinate efforts...



...and at *Vimy Ridge* and elsewhere, the use of tunnels and underground approaches to mask from the enemy the presence of troops and also to ensure the same troops' security.



(Right top and above: *By the conclusion of the Battle of Arras, Écoivres Military Cemetery was beginning to look as pictured at the top; the colour image shows the same burial ground a century and a few months after the events of the spring of 1917. – from a vintage post-card and from the autumn of 2017)*

(Right above: *Canadian troops from an unspecified unit engaged in road construction, this also being a job to which Pioneer battalions were to be assigned – from Le Miroir or Illustration)*

And at the same time it surely had been becoming clear to the troops of the infantry battalions that something was in the offing, and it was to occur in the near-by sectors: the forward and rear areas in the Neuville St-Vaast Sector – including Écoivres - had been hives of ongoing activity for which the units had supplied working-parties and carrying-parties each day: dumping-areas had been cleared, bivouacs had been sand-bagged, stone had been laid for walks, new trenches had been dug and old ones deepened, troops familiarized with the newly-excavated tunnels and other positions, water-pipes and communication lines buried, artillery and machine-guns sited...

And while the above-mentioned working-parties and carrying-parties had done their fair share, the pioneer and entrenching battalions had also been working flat out – and in horrendous weather conditions. The 107th Battalion since its arrival had been...*employed on Light Railway, Building Roads and Mule Track, loading steel, digging cable-trenches, cleaning trenches, excavating dug-outs and tunnels, constructing an underground Dressing-Station...*with the workers required to march each day back and forth to the places of work.

As the final days before the offensive had passed, as of April 2 the artillery barrage had begun to grow progressively heavier; on April 6, Good Friday, the War Diarist of another battalion had described it as...*drums*. By this time, of course, the Germans would have become aware that something was soon to be in the offing as their guns in their turn had been throwing retaliatory fire onto the Canadian positions - and their aircraft had been extremely busy*.



(Right above: *A heavy British artillery piece continues its deadly work during a night before the attack on Vimy Ridge. – from Illustration*)

**It should be said that a great deal of the artillery used in the assault on Vimy Ridge was British and that a British Division – only a single Brigade employed on April 9 – also participated. Almost fifty per cent of the personnel who had been employed for that day were British, not to mention those whose contribution – such as those who dug the tunnels - allowed for it to happen.*

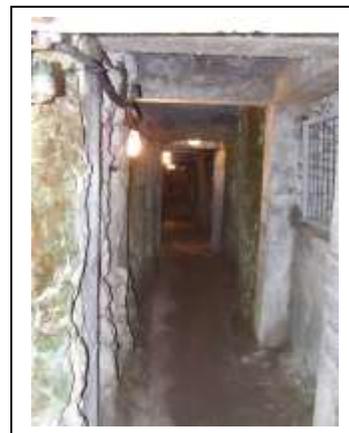
On April 9, Easter Monday, in that spring of 1917, the British Army had launched an offensive in the area to the north of *the Somme* battlefields; this was to be the so-called *Battle of Arras* intended to support a French effort elsewhere. In terms of the count of casualties, some four thousand per day, it would be the most expensive operation of the entire *Great War* for the British, one of the very few positive episodes to be the assault by the Canadian Corps of *Vimy Ridge* on the opening day of the advance.



The British campaign would prove an overall disappointment but, in contrast, that French offensive of *le Chemin des Dames* was to be yet a further disaster.

(Right above: *The Canadian National Memorial which, since 1936, has stood on Vimy Ridge – photograph from 2010*)

On that April 9, in driving snow, the four Canadian Divisions, for the first time acting as a single, autonomous entity, had stormed the slope of *Vimy Ridge*, by the end of the next day having cleared it almost entirely of its German occupants.



(Preceding page: *One of the few remaining galleries – Grange Tunnel - still open to the public at Vimy Ridge one hundred years later – photograph from 2008(?)*)

(Right: *Canadian troops of the 4th or 3rd Division, burdened with all the paraphernalia of war, on the advance across No-Man's-Land during the attack at Vimy Ridge on either April 9 or 10 of 1917 - from Illustration*)



(Right below: *Canadians under shell-fire occupying the third line of trenches on Vimy Ridge, anonymous dead lying in the foreground: The fighting of the next few days was to be fought under the same conditions. – from Illustration*)

The Germans, having lost *Vimy Ridge* and the presumed advantages of the high ground, had retreated some three kilometres into prepared positions in front of the Canadians whose further offensives were to be less successful than that of *Easter Monday*; while some progress at times would be made – at *Arleux-en-Gohelle*, for example - German counter-attacks were also to reclaim ground from the British and Canadian troops – as at *Fresnoy-en-Gohelle* in early May.



(Right below: *German prisoners being escorted to the rear by Canadian troops during the attack on Vimy Ridge – from Illustration*)

There had been, on those first days of April 9 and 10, the opportunity to advance through the shattered enemy defences – the highly-touted, but highly unlikely, *breakthrough* – however, such a follow-up of the previous day's success had proved to be logistically impossible, the weather having prevented any swift movement of guns and material – and in any case, the orders had been...*to consolidate*.



Thus the Germans had been granted the time to close the breach and the conflict once more was to revert to one of inertia.

(Right: *Even as the railway was being built, supplies were brought forwards and the wounded evacuated to the rear area. – from Illustration*)



Nor was the remainder of the relatively short, five-week long, *Battle of Arras* to be fought in the manner of the first two days and, by the end of those five weeks, little else had changed and the Germans had recovered from the initial Canadian success.

(Right: *In a field on the outskirts of the village of Thélus stands this monument, placed there during Christmas of 1917, to the 1st Canadian Division and its sacrifices at Vimy Ridge. – photograph from 2017*)



As for the 107th Battalion during those days of Canadian history in the making, it had continued with the tasks and the duties of the days before – and of the days that were to come. The Battalion War Diary for that April 9, 1917, reads as follows in its entirety: *Écoivres 9/4/17 – Rain and very dull. 3 Companies at Maison Blanche under orders to assist in burying cable and improving communication forward through NO MAN’S LAND. One Company in reserve at MAISON BLANCHE.*

And on the morrow, April 10: *Still carrying on laying cable and building Light Railway.*

Perhaps from a more positive point of view, casualties for the month of April had been light: *all ranks – five killed in action, twelve wounded, four slightly wounded (thus likely returned to duty).*



(Right above: *Canadian troops constructing a light railway in a rear area somewhere in France – from Illustration*)

As seen further above, Private Pender reported *to duty* on May 5 despite having been despatched from the Base Depot – according to his papers – on April 26. It was a day on which the entire 107th Battalion was hard at work making repairs to the main Lens-Arras Road. Private Pender likely soon joined in.

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During the last weeks of May, after the official close of the *Battle of Arras*, and the months of June and July, 1917, the Canadian Infantry battalions were withdrawn regularly – and for appreciable periods of time as well for periods of well-earned rest. In contrast, however, Private Pender’s unit was still labouring for most of that time, undertaking construction and maintenance. Perhaps consolation was to be had in the results of the Battalion football team: during this period it played only four matches...but won them all.

The British High Command by that time, indeed long before, had decided to undertake a summer offensive in the *Ypres Salient*, Belgium. Thus, in order to divert German attention – and also his reserves - from this area, it had ordered other operations as well to take place in the sectors of the front running north-south from Béthune down to Lens.



(Preceding page: *An example of the conditions under which the troops were ordered to fight in the area of Lens during the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir*)

The Canadians were to be a major contributor to this effort and one of the primary objectives was to be *Hill 70* in the outskirts of the mining centre of Lens.

(Right: *Canadian troops advancing across No-Man's Land in the summer of 1917 – from Le Miroir*)



Those expecting *Hill 70* to be a precipitous and ominous elevation are to be surprised. It is hardly prominent in a countryside that is already flat, the highest points being the summits of slag heaps which date from the mining era of yesteryear.

(Right: *This gentle slope rising to the left is, in fact, Hill 70. A monument to the 15th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry stands nearby in tribute. – photograph from 1914*)



Yet *Hill 70* was high enough to have been considered - by the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Arthur Currie – as the key feature in the area, its capture more important than that of the city of Lens itself.

(Right: *The portrait of Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie is from Illustration.*)

Objectives would be limited and had for the most part been achieved by the end of August 15. Due to the dominance of *Hill 70* over the entire area, it had been expected that the Germans would endeavour to retrieve it and so it was to prove; on the 16th several strong counter-attacks were launched against the Canadian positions, positions that by this time had been transformed into defensive strong-points.



These defences now held firm and the Canadian artillery, by then employing newly-developed procedures, was to inflict heavy losses on the enemy. *Hill 70* thus remained in Canadian hands.

(Right: *Canadian troops in the vicinity of Hill 70 a short time after its capture by the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions – from Le Miroir*)



The 107th *Pioneer* Battalion, attached to the 1st Canadian Division, had been ordered to move forward in support and...*In the operation on this date, the 107th Battalion was employed on constructing trenches across NO MAN'S LAND and keeping the roads and Light tramways in repair for the 1st Division... All of the above work was carried on under heavy shell fire during advance of 1st DIVISION EAST OF LOOS.*

(Right: *The spoils of war: Canadian officers and men on some of the terrain on which they had recently fought – and captured – from Le Miroir*)



August 15 also saw the highest number of casualties incurred by the 107th Battalion on any day up until that time: all ranks – nineteen *killed in action*, eighty-one *wounded*, nine *gassed*, forty *wounded remained on duty*, two *missing in action*.

On August 17 there were to be more, on this occasion the Germans having used mustard gas: *wounded* – four; *gassed* – eighty-four.

Private Pender was one of the gassed, and incurred gas burns – blistering - to his body.

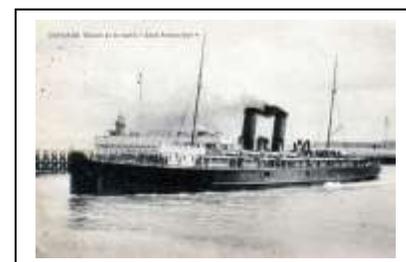
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On the following day he was evacuated to an unidentified field ambulance where he was retained for treatment for three days. Then, on August 21 he was forwarded for further attention to the 25th General Hospital, at the time established at Hardelot, a dozen kilometres or so down the coast from Boulogne.



(Right: *A British field ambulance, of a more permanent nature than some – from a vintage post-card*)

His stay at the 25th General was not to be of a long duration: on the morrow, August 22, he was placed on board the Belgian hospital ship *Stad Antwerpen* for the short passage to England. Upon his arrival back in England, on the following day he was *taken on strength* by the Manitoba Regimental Depot based at *Shorncliffe* – but that his presence there was a physical one is unlikely since on that same day he was admitted into the Kitchener Hospital in the south coast resort-town of Brighton*.



**The full name was Kitchener General Indian Hospital of two-thousand beds. Originally a work-house, it was transformed into a training hospital for the Indian Military. As such, it dis-allowed female nurses – in some areas no females at all were to work there – and the different religious and caste systems were recognized and strictly adhered to.*

It officially became the Number 10 Canadian General Hospital on September 10, 1917, during Private Pender's term of hospitalization there.

(Right above: *The Belgian cross-Channel ferry 'Stad Antwerpen' was to serve as a hospital ship from 1915 to 1919. The image shown appears to be from before the Great War. – image from The Library web-site*)

(continued)

It was a nine-week road to recovery for Private Pender. He remained at Brighton until October 5-6 of that year at which time he was transferred to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Woodcote Park, in the town – and horse-racing centre – of Epsom, Surrey. On October 19 he was discharged.

On that day he likely received a ten-day sick furlough. Where was now to spend this time has not been documented, but London is only a short railway-journey from Epsom.

(Right: *The area around Marble Arch, although in today's Greater London, is in fact sited in the 'City of Westminster'. It is seen here as it was in 1913, just prior to the Great War. – from a vintage post-card*)



When he returned *to duty* he would have reported back to *Shorncliffe* as he was still on strength of the Manitoba Regimental Depot based there. There he was immediately assigned to the 1st Canadian Command Depot*. Some three months later, on January 29, 1918, he was *struck off strength* by the Command Depot to be thereupon *taken on strength* by the 18th (Canadian) Reserve Battalion, also stationed at *Shorncliffe* at the subsidiary *Dibgate Camp*.

**A Command Depot was a facility to which military personnel with no attachments to any unit were sent – often, but not exclusively, they had been discharged from hospital – to be evaluated as to their future use – if any – to the armed forces.*

During his posting to the 1st Canadian Command Depot there had been a further black mark on Private Pender's record: he had been *Absent Without Leave* once more, on this occasion from an evening 'Tattoo' until almost eleven o'clock on the same day. No punishment appears to have been recorded for this offence which he was soon to repeat.

Two days following this change of unit on January 29, Private Pender was once more receiving treatment, at the medical facilities at *Dibgate Camp*, having had a relapse due to his gassing on January 31. His stay on this occasion was short: he was released *to duty* back to the 18th Battalion on February 2-3.

Two further disciplinary incidents were now to occur in a short period of time while he was still with the 18th Battalion: *AWL Reveille 5/2/18 to 11.45 same date, breaking camp while in arrest* & absent from Tattoo 11.2.18 to 2 pm 18.2.18 awarded 28 days FP forfeits eight days pay; then – 7 days FP #2 neglecting to obey an order 11.3.18 Sentence runs concurrently with previous punishment*

**This episode apparently has not been recorded elsewhere on his files.*

Almost three weeks of training – plus his four-week detention - now ensued before Private Pender was once more transferred, on March 21, and now to the Canadian Engineer Training Depot. This unit had been organized at the Canadian camp in the vicinity of Seaford in East Sussex on the south coast of England.

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(Right: *The community cemetery at Seaford in which are buried a number of Canadian soldiers, including two Newfoundlanders: Frederick Jacob Snelgrove and Ebenezer Tucker – photograph from 2016*)



Those bad habits continued: AWL 9.30 pm 25/3/18 to 9 45 am 29/3/18 – 14 days FP #2 & 8 days pay; and - AWL 4/4/18 – 10 days pay

Next sent to Detention Barracks – prison – at Wandsworth in South London on April 20, from there he returned on April 29. Some three weeks later again, on May 21, Private Pender was to move once more, having been ordered to report to the 2nd Canadian Engineer Reserve Battalion, it also based at Seaford. This was a new formation issuing from the re-organization of the Canadian Engineers and it was here that he was now to train for the next month.

And apparently he *did* train. His records for the month record no further disciplinary problems and in fact, when he, as one of a draft of twenty-two, was sent to France from Seaford on the night of June 22-23, it was as an artificer, skilled a variety of mechanics.

Although there is no record among his papers, the draft may well have travelled via the south-coast English port of Southampton and through the French Industrial port-city of Le Havre situated on the estuary of the River Seine. On the following day, June 24, the twenty-two Engineers from Seaford reported to the Canadian General Base Depot at Étapes.

Having been *taken* on strength – on paper - at the General Base Depot on June 24 by the 1st Canadian Engineer Reserve Pool, by June 29 Private Pender had been despatched to – and arrived at – the *Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp* at Aubin St-Vaast where the Engineers' Reserve Pool was based, some forty kilometres to the south-east. His arrival, while the date is not documented, was prior to July 3 as it was then that he was sent to the 59th Casualty Clearing Station at Hesdin exhibiting the symptoms of influenza, the disease, if not already, soon to become an epidemic.

(Right: *A British casualty clearing station – the one pictured here under canvas for mobility if and whenever the necessity were to arise – being established somewhere in France during the early years of the War: Other such medical establishments were often of a much more permanent nature. - from a vintage post-card*)



It was to be a very temporary visit – perhaps even a false alarm – as he was released back *to duty* on the following day.

Another month was now to pass before the call to service with the 1st Battalion, Canadian Engineers, came. It was on August 6 that Private Pender was *struck off strength* by the Reserve Pool at the CCRC, August 7 when he was despatched to his new unit and August 8 when he reported *to duty*.

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It was a day on which the first of the British and Commonwealth-led offensives which would – in collaboration with advances by their allies and associated troops – culminate three months hence, with the signing of the Armistice of November 11, 1918. It was the start of *the Hundred Days*.

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During the course of the *Great War*, the formation of the Canadian Engineers* had seen a number of administrative changes:

Throughout most of the war, each division had three field companies of engineers and one pioneer battalion. In April 1918, however, a major reorganization took place and, as a result, each division had an Engineer Brigade consisting of three engineer battalions and a pontoon bridging transport unit. Each of the battalions was composed of a headquarters and four companies, three of which were organized for general engineering work and the fourth for tunnelling and mining. The nucleus of each new battalion was provided by one of the field companies and one third of a pioneer battalion. (Library and Archives Canada)

Then, in June of 1918, the Engineer Battalions were organized into Brigades. In the case of Private Pender's former unit, the 107th Canadian Pioneer Battalion, its personnel was distributed at the end of May, 1918, among the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions, Canadian Engineers. These three units on June 1, were all to become components of the fledgling 1st Canadian Engineer Brigade, itself now an element of the 1st Canadian Division.

**In 1904 the Royal Canadian Engineers became a part of the Permanent Active Militia which had been created from a small number of Canadian Militia to serve as a regular armed force – in contrast to most Canadian Militia units which were of a temporary or even seasonal nature, and were to remain so as the Non-Permanent Active Militia.*

After the onset of the Great War, new engineering units – Companies then Battalions - were formed, their personnel to come from those who were to volunteer for the 'Duration of the War plus six months'. These war-time temporary units were designated as the Canadian Engineers.

In 1936, the still-serving units of these two formations were united to become the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers

In June and until mid-July the 1st Canadian Engineer Brigade had been headquartered at Villers-Chattel, some twenty kilometres to the north-west of Arras. The 1st Battalion, Canadian Engineers, during that same period, was to be found in close proximity, in the vicinity of neighbouring Gauchin-Légal, undergoing training and, it would seem, playing a goodly amount of sports.



(Right above: *A Canadian carrying-party loading up before moving up to the forward area, one of the many duties of troops when in support or reserve: the head-bands - called 'tumps' - was an idea which had been adopted from the North American aboriginal peoples – from Le Miroir*)

On July 12, the unit had been re-posted, to march to the city of Arras to continue the work of the 3rd Battalion which had been engaged in demolition and dugout construction – while at the same time sheltering from enemy shelling, although not always successfully.

(Right below: *The City Hall of Arras and its clock-tower in 1919 after some four years of bombardment by German artillery – from a vintage post-card*)

On the final day of the month...*Handed to 416th Fld. Coy. R.E. (Royal Engineers) all work in VITASSE Section. Moved to Dainville in afternoon.* The billets at Dainville, a community to the westward of Arras was to be the first in a number of stages on the 1st Canadian Engineer Brigade's way to battle.



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During the spring of that 1918, the Germans had launched a number of offensives against both the British and Commonwealth, and French positions on the Western Front. After the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with Russia on March 3, there were now some forty divisions now available to be transferred to the west. The first of these operations had begun on the first day of spring, March 21.

However, while having ceded a large amount of territory to the attacking Germans and having lost large numbers either as casualties or as prisoners, nothing of major strategic value had passed into enemy hands, and the German floods had been staunch.



(Right: *British troops on the retreat in Flanders at the outset of the German offensive of April 9, 1918 – from Illustration*)

Nor was the subsequent calm particularly surprising: all sides had been exhausted and were now to need time to once more re-organize and – less and less feasible in these later years of the war – to re-enforce. The Allies from this point of view would eventually be a lot better off than their German adversaries* – they had two empires to draw from and the Americans were belatedly arriving on the scene*.

**The arrival of those troops from the Russian Front was to represent the final substantial reserves available to the German High Command. On the other hand, as seen above, their adversaries would soon see not only a superiority but a supremacy in numbers. It was to be only a matter of time.*

In late March an overall Allied Commander-in-Chief had been appointed, Foch, and he was setting about organizing – some sources feel the term to be a bit flattering - a counter-offensive. Thus the front was to remain quiet – until the second week in August.

(Right: *Le Maréchal Ferdinand Jean-Marie Foch, this photograph from 1921, became Generalissimo of the Allied Armies on March 26, 1918. – photograph from the Wikipedia web-site*)



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Thus it was that on that July 31, the 1st Battalion, Canadian Engineers, had marched to Dainville. The unit then was to make its way, by railway and on foot, via such places as Gouy-en-Ternois, Nesle-le-Hopital, Boves and then on to *Gentelles Wood*, by August 6. There the unit was to be employed for the day in the gas-proofing of dug-outs as well as with the filling-in of shell-holes.

Then, having retired to the area of Boves, the unit was now to remain there for the following two days, until August 8.

The 1st Battalion, Canadian Engineers, had not been alone on the roads during these few days: a large number of other Canadian units* – indeed almost the entire *Canadian Corps* – had at that same time been moving by a semi-circular itinerary, to the west of Amiens, then south, then east again to finish in front – to the east - of the city.

**As well as French and other British and Commonwealth forces*

This immense – and complicated - movement was to be effected in only a matter of days, all of the latter stages of it on foot and these also during the hours of darkness.

(Right: *The venerable gothic cathedral in the city of Amiens which the leading German troops had apparently been able see on the western skyline in the spring of 1918 – photograph from 2007(?)*)



It was intended to surprise the enemy – and it did.

At 4.30 in the morning on that August 8, the offensive, supported by the opening barrage, began – *the Hundred Days* as it became known – one of the multiple offensives which were to bring the *Great War* to a close on November 11.

The Canadians, supported by tanks, were to move forward some twenty kilometres in the first three days of the attack, a feat unheard of since the autumn of 1914 after which the opposing forces had settled into four years of trench stalemate*.

(Right: *In 1917 the British formed the Tank Corps, a force which became ever stronger in 1918 as evidenced by this photograph of a tank park, once again ‘somewhere in France’ – from Illustration*)



**The only exceptions to this rule having been the opening day of the First Battle of Cambrai, November 20, 1917, and the German advance in that March of 1918.*

Excerpts from 1st Battalion, Canadian Engineers War Diary entry for August 7, 1918: *Received orders for tomorrow’s operation... The work of this Battalion will be to fill shell holes...also to reconnoitre for enemy Engineer Dumps and Dugouts, and to complete work on GENTELLES-CACHY Road.*

Excerpts from 1st Battalion, Canadian Engineers War Diary entry for August 8, 1918: *...moved off from BOVES at 12.30 a.m. arriving at assembly area about 2.45 a.m. ...the Companies waited there for zero hour. This was at 4.20 a.m. and at once our barrage came down. At about 5 a.m. the Battalion moved up somewhat and at 5.20 a.m....went forward to the work. Held up once or twice by hostile shelling but well before 8.00 am...commenced filling shell holes... This work continued throughout the day. ...An enemy dump of Engineer Material was located and an inventory taken... Road completed as passable for guns and Lorries as far as CAYEUX before midday.*

And later that day...33 O.R's reported as reinforcements.

Sapper – now designated thus - Pender had arrived to duty with the 1st Battalion, Canadian Engineers.

(Right: *Canadian Sappers at work filling the craters on a road damaged by the detonation of German mines, 'somewhere in France' – from le Miroir*)



* * * * *

August 9 proved to be a day of rest; the advance, for a number of reasons, was slowing down and, in fact, as for as Sapper Pender's Battalion was concerned...*Work on road stopped. Enemy bombing very close at night.*



(Right above: *Canadian and German wounded from the first days of the battle – some cases more serious than others - waiting to be evacuated to the rear – from Le Miroir*)

(Right below: *While Canadian troops cross a make-shift bridge in the background, others, likely engineers, consolidate one of the newly-won positions. – from Le Miroir*)

The road work re-commenced of the next day and continued on into August 11 with the Battalion's Companies then billeted alongside the roads that they had repaired on that day. It then continued for the next ten days, interspersed by dug-out construction, although at time hindered by the volume of traffic already using the roads by then - although not by enemy planes which, as with the German artillery, appear to have been recuperating at the time from the surprise of Allied attacks. By August 21 the Battalion had advanced well along the road towards the community of Roye.



And then Sapper Pender and his unit were withdrawn. Using the same itineraries and much the same means, foot, then motorized transport and the railways before foot again, the Canadian Corps was beginning to transfer its forces back whence they had come some three weeks before: to the *Arras Sector*. The place of the Canadian troops in front of Amiens was now to be taken up by elements of the French Army.



(Preceding page: *French dead in the communal cemetery at Caix, just to the west of Rosières, the French having relieved Canadian troops towards the end of the second week of the battle: Caix also hosts a British Commonwealth cemetery as well as a German burial ground. – photograph from 2017*)

Having retired on August 21 to the *Gentelles Wood* from where the unit had jumped off on the first day of the offensive, on the morrow it was to march as far as Cagny, just south-east of Arras. The Battalion remained there – in comfortable billets, notes the War Diarist – until August 25 when it again marched, on this occasion to Saleux, some three hours distant, where it boarded a train which was to return the Battalion to Aubigny, to the north-west of Arras.

By the evening of August 26 Sapper Pender's Battalion had returned to the area of Arras where, on the following day, the Battalion personnel was to be required as labour for the construction of a light tramway.

Excerpts from the 1st Battalion, Canadian Engineers, War Diary entry for August 28, 1918: ***In ARRAS. A certain amount of shelling of the town to-day. Battn still working on Light Tramway as far forward as MONCHY-LE-PREUX... 2 O.R's wounded.***

****Of interest to Newfoundland readers may be that on August 26 Monchy-le Preux was captured by troops of the 3rd Canadian Division. More than sixteen months earlier, on April 14 of 1917, the Newfoundland Regiment had been ordered forward into a battle that should never have been. While a desperate defence later in the day had earned ten men – nine from the Regiment – a medal each, the unit was to incur some four-hundred eighty killed, wounded, missing or taken prisoner.***



After Beaumont-Hamel, April 14, 1917, was to be the costliest day of the (Royal) Newfoundland Regiment's war.

(Right above: *The village of Monchy-le-Preux as seen today from the south-west. In 1917 the Newfoundlanders, already in the village, had advanced out of the ruins of the village to the east, away from the camera; in 1918 the Canadians, attacking from the west, encircled the place. – photograph from 2014*

On this day the Battalion War Diarist appears to have been incorrect in his above documentation of casualties.

Casualty report: *"Killed in Action" – while waiting on the road 'north of Guémappe', to guide in the transport, an enemy shell exploded close to him, killing him instantly.*

(Right: *Monchy-le-Preux as seen from that main Arras-Cambrai road 'north of Guémappe', and in the area where Sapper Pender was killed – photograph from 2015*



(continued)

The son of John Pender (perhaps *Pendergast**, see below), former labourer deceased by 1904, and of Annie Pender (née *Aylward***), to whom on October 5, 1916, he had willed his all, and to whom as of November 1, 1915, he had allocated a monthly twenty dollars from his pay, he was also brother to Sarah, to Bridget, to John-Thomas, to Cornelius and to William-Joseph.

**The Newfoundland Register of Marriages records the wedding of John Pendergast and Ann Aylward on May 3, 1879.*

**Her address also variously recorded as having been 13 Rossiter's Lane (before 1913), then 45 Plank Road (on his attestation papers), 15 Plank Road after December 1918, and 29 Plank Road in the 1921 Census.*

Sapper Pender was reported as having been *killed in action* on August 28, 1918.

(Right: *This family memorial, to be found in the Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Cemetery in St. John's, commemorates and honours the sacrifice of Sapper Joseph Patrick Pender. – photograph from 2022, with thanks for same to my wife Claire*)



Joseph Patrick Pender had enlisted at the *apparent* age of nineteen years: date of birth in St. John's, Newfoundland, July 10, 1889 (from attestation papers); however, the Newfoundland Birth Register documents the date as having been April 27, 1890.

Sapper Joseph Patrick Pender was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).



The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 19, 2023.